

Overview

In this activity, you will use two checklists to help you begin reflecting on your approach to language development and your teaching practices.

Objectives

- To take a physical inventory of language and print exposure in your classroom and a personal inventory of your approach to vocabulary instruction.

Materials

- “Features of a Language-Rich Classroom” Checklists (Part 1 and Part 2)

Instructions

1. Think about Your Current Practice

- Think about the activities and opportunities for language development that you provide in your classroom.
- As much as possible, try to imagine how your approach to language instruction might look to an outsider.

2. Consider the Items on the Checklists

- Print out the “Features of a Language-Rich Classroom” Checklists,
- provided below. The first checklist gives you the opportunity to reflect on your vocabulary instruction more generally. The second checklist invites you to reflect on each aspect of your classroom individually.
- Mark off the items that you believe are currently in place in your classroom and are a regular part of your teaching practice.
- Take a moment to reflect on how your practice is similar to or different from what you see described in the checklist.

3. Prepare to Share

Consider the following questions, and prepare to share your thoughts and ideas with other teachers taking this course. (Note: You will be prompted to go to the discussion area of this web site in the next *Share Ideas*.) Based on your reflections and observations:

- Which aspects of a language-rich classroom would you say you have implemented successfully? Which aspects would you like to work on?
- Was there anything on these checklists that you didn’t expect to see? If so, what?
- What other vocabulary instruction practices, tools, strategies, or materials would you add to these checklists?

CIRCLE Tip: Room Arrangement for Optimal Language Interaction

A balanced classroom arrangement should include both large, open spaces for gathering together as a whole class as well as small, partitioned spaces for learning in small groups. However, keep in mind that...

Small, partitioned spaces promote:

- Higher quality verbal interaction.
- Increased cooperative play.
- Greater use of language-related activities.

While large, open spaces result in:

- Poor language interactions.
- Less use of language-related activities.

Name _____
Date _____

Features of a Language-Rich Classroom Checklist (Part 1)

This checklist gives you the opportunity to reflect on your vocabulary instruction in general. Take a moment to mark off the items that you feel are a regular part of your teaching practice. Consider the items that you would like to add to your teaching practice.

Teachers in a language-rich classroom:

Planned Vocabulary Instruction

- ☐ Say the new word in the context it is being used
- ☐ Children say the word with the teacher
- ☐ Give a child friendly definition of the word (e.g. “**Tromp** means to stomp your feet when you walk”)
- ☐ Give other examples of the word used in a different contexts
- ☐ Give an example from their experiences with the word (e.g. T: “What are some things you have **sniffed**? C: cookies!”)
- ☐ Give examples and non-examples of the word (e.g. “**Slowly**” – show pictures of or say: turtle, elephant, snail, cheetah.
- ☐ Children say **slowly** if animal moves slowly, nothing if the animal does not move slowly.)
- ☐ Practice using the word (e.g. have children give examples of when they were **excited**: “I was **excited** when____”)
- ☐ Act out the word (e.g. show me how you would **tromp**)
- ☐ Give synonyms/antonyms (e.g. **fabulous** – great, wonderful; not good, awful, terrible)
- ☐ Use graphic organizer to teach vocabulary or concepts (e.g. **inside** - use Venn diagram: put activities children could do inside, outside or both; **plants** – use concept web to explain what it is, where they grow, kinds of plants, etc.)

During Interactive Read Alouds or Centers

- ☐ Read aloud daily (three times minimum)

- ☐ Identify rare words in books and plan child-friendly definitions
- ☐ Engage children in extended, cognitively challenging conversations
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions
- ☐ Encourage children to retell stories
- ☐ Encourage children to describe events in their lives
- ☐ Discuss a wide range of topics
- ☐ Model the use of new and unusual words
- ☐ Discuss word meanings
- ☐ Challenge children to justify or explain their thinking
- ☐ Encourage children to express ideas using complex sentences and vocabulary
- ☐ Encourage language play
- ☐ Encourage pretend play and pretend talk
- ☐ Interact with children one-on-one and in small groups
- ☐ Create an environmental print rich learning space
- ☐ Create small, partitioned spaces instead of large, open spaces in order to promote conversation
- ☐ Engage children in conversations that involve child and teacher taking multiple turns
(e.g. 3-5 turns, such as Child > Teacher > Child or Teacher > Child > Teacher > Child)

General Oral Language Modeling

- ☐ Naming, labeling, and describing items
- ☐ Comparing/contrasting items
- ☐ Modeling Inferencing/Judgements (e.g., discuss something not explicitly stated or obvious "I think... he's hungry/it's winter" "That's beautiful/funny/etc.")
- ☐ Explaining (function/cause & effect; e.g. "A **blender** cuts things up very, very tiny. / When you turn on a **blender**, the blades chop things up very finely.")
- ☐ Linking (personal connection) (e.g. "When we had lunch yesterday, you **sniffed** the pizza")

Name _____

Date _____

Features of a Language-Rich Classroom Checklist (Part 2)

The second checklist invites you to reflect on each aspect of your classroom individually. Take a moment to mark off the items that you feel are a regular part of your teaching practice. Consider the items that you would like to add to your teaching practice.

<p>Print-Rich Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Environmental print displayed___ Classroom labels visible___ Children's names visible___ Children's work displayed___ Theme is evident in classroom___ Poems & rhymes posted___ Management charts with icons___ Well-stocked library (fiction/nonfiction, etc.) <p>Classroom Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Teacher is friendly and sensitive to children's needs___ Smooth transitions between activities and centers___ Clearly defined routines <p>Language Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Teacher interacts with small groups of children___ Children are encouraged to speak in complete sentences___ Student talk outweighs teacher talk <p>Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Used daily (45 min.- 1 hour)___ Clear boundaries between centers___ Management system in place___ Literary connections in each center___ Variety of fun and purposeful activities in each center___ Writing materials in each center___ Opportunities for children to speak to adults and peers___ Small-group read alouds <p>Circle Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ 2-3 times per day for 15-20 min. (5 per week for half-day classrooms)___ Calendar time (3-5 min.)___ Child interaction evident___ Center activities explained ahead of time___ New materials introduced___ Variety of activities	<p>Read Alouds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Small-group and full-group read alouds___ 2-3 per day (7 per week for half-day classrooms)___ Open-ended questions <p>Letter Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Name activities evident___ Alphabet activities evident___ Letter wall sequences & continuous from A to Z___ Words and icons on vocabulary cards___ Letter wall contains vocabulary related to themes and read alouds___ Children's names and pictures on letter wall <p>Emergent Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Evidence of shared writing (Daily News, response to literature, etc.)___ Daily opportunities for individual writing___ Children made class books <p>Journals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Accessible to children___ Occurs 3 or more times weekly___ Entries are dated <p>Lesson Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Theme-related activities___ Daily phonological awareness activities <p>Portfolios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ One for every child___ Children's work included___ Anecdotal notes___ Assessment
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